



Another successful affair for what has become a Valentine's Day tradition in Aruba

When the volunteers of the Friends of the Handicapped decided to organize their first Sweetheart's Dinner Dance five years ago, they had no idea how successful it would become. Now, for many an island visitor and resident, it is the only way to celebrate Valentine's Day, and with good reason.

Steve and Diane Wild, the movers and shakers behind this lavish affair, are fantastic organizers and wonderful hosts. Joined at the podium by Phil Solomon, FOTH's treasurer, they kept everyone's attention as they called out the winners of the door prizes and awarded a number of fabulous gifts donated by long standing supporters from the Aruban business community. Attendees, after enjoying a festive happy hour and a delicious meal in the Grand Ballroom of the Radisson Aruba Resort brandished their winning tickets as they came up to the dance floor to collect their booty.

Fine jewelry from Noble and Shiva Jewelers, Sailing trips on the Jolly Pirates, dinners for two from fine restaurants, artwork, a collection of gifts and clothes from Coconut Trading and much more were all raffled off, with a final grand prize of \$2000 going to a lucky winner. Two couple were also celebrating not only this special day for lovers, but it was their anniversaries as well, and that also earned them a special prize. It is not the prizes that bring people back to the Sweetheart's Dinner Dance year after year. It is a wonderful evening to spend with a loved one, great fun and interesting people, with the wonderful music of Tico Croes and the Crystal Breeze Band taking everyone well into midnight and packing the dance floor. Each lady had their rose and heart shaped cookie in hand when they left at the end of the evening, and the satisfaction of not only having a wonderful time, but knowing that all the proceeds from the dance will be distributed to worthy foundations around the island that are dedicated to assisting Aruba's mentally and physically handicapped. Since the Friends of the Handicapped was founded twenty years ago by Wilma and Keith Jones of Indiana, who have since passed on, the island visitors that have tirelessly volunteered their vacation time have collected and donated over one million dollars to assist the island's physically and mentally challenged. With 232 attending last night's dance, chief organizer Steve Wild deemed it a great success, While welcoming everyone attending, he introduced and thanked all those who contributed their time to make it a success. All the holiday celebrants that enjoyed their efforts had to agree; it was another fabulous evening, the perfect Valentine's Day celebration!